Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 Heals Hospital's Secure Collaboration Issue

Overview

Country: Canada
Industry: Health Care

Customer Profile

The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto is Canada's largest centre dedicated to improving children's health, integrating research, teaching and specialized care through scientific advancements.

Business Situation

Mandated to lead the federal government's surgery Wait Time Guarantee project, the Hospital required a platform for collecting data from 16 participating health care institutions.

Solution

The Hospital chose Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007 as an external document management and collaboration platform. Microsoft Gold Partner Envision IT added extranet functionality.

Benefits

■ Strong privacy protection
■ Superior data intelligence
■ Immediate productivity

"We needed usage-access controls, ease-of-use, and a solution that the stakeholders in partnering institutions would be able to learn quickly."

Daniela Crivianu-Gaita, CIO, The Hospital for Sick Children

With hospital wait-times a major concern across Canada, in 2007 the federal government announced a pilot project aimed at children in need of surgery. The project included development of the first pan-Canadian information system to measure the burden of wait times for children who need surgery and a recourse plan for children whose surgical wait times fall beyond clinical access guidelines. The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, the project's national headquarters, had to collect and consolidate data from 16 paediatric health centres. The Hospital needed a secure, easy to use and flexible document management and collaboration platform, and selected Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007. Implemented with features from Microsoft Gold Partner Envision IT, the solution helps participating stakeholders at the 16 paediatric institutions work together and share information.

Situation

Health care wait times are a major concern in Canada. According to a 2005 Statistics Canada report, nearly 66 per cent of people polled felt they waited too long to have surgery – up from 62 per cent in 2003.

In January 2007, the Canadian federal government decided to tackle the issue of children's wait times by announcing the surgical Wait Time Guarantee project, designed to define a Patient Wait Time Guarantee for children. The project would include the development of the first pan-Canadian wait time information system to measure wait times for children surgeries in six areas: cardiac, cancer, neurology, sight, spinal deformity and dental treatment requiring anesthesia. The project would also include the development of a clinical recourse plan for children whose surgical wait times fall beyond the guidelines proposed by the National Child and Youth Health Coalition and endorsed by the Paediatric Surgical Chiefs of Canada.

The Wait Time Guarantee project was spearheaded by a partnership between Canada's 16 paediatric academic health science centres, under the leadership of The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Their goal is to take on the challenge of surgical wait times to ensure that patients get the attention they need in a timely way and when they need it.

As the headquarters of the Wait Time Guarantee project, The Hospital for Sick Children needed to collect, exchange and manage information coming from the 15 other paediatric health centres across the country. As hospital administrators considered the resources and technology requirements, they quickly realized the need for a communication tool and document management solution to address several key items.

Security was one prevalent requirement. The solution would have to allow project administrators to set usage-access privileges so that only authorized people could access and view sensitive documents. Canada has strict privacy regulations regarding patient information, so The Hospital for Sick Children needed to ensure that documents would be secure.

The system would also need to be intuitive for users uploading or downloading information from participating paediatric health centres across the country to ensure rapid adoption; the sooner the participating stakeholders could access the system, the sooner the project would begin to have a positive effect.

Finally, the solution would have to enable users to find documents easily. As the information came in, project stakeholders would need to retrieve earlier documents for comparison purposes. Relevant search results would significantly reduce the amount of time required for such research.

"It was clear from the beginning that email wouldn't give us the functionality we needed," said Daniela Crivianu-Gaita, CIO, The Hospital for Sick Children. "We needed usage-access controls, ease-of-use, and a solution that the stakeholders in partnering institutions could learn quickly."

Solution

After evaluating several options, The Hospital for Sick Children selected Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007. Part of the 2007 Microsoft Office System, Office SharePoint Server 2007 facilitates collaboration among users and helps organizations manage content, implement business processes, and supply access to information essential to organizational goals. Office SharePoint Server 2007 also helps users upload and access documents on a searchable, Web-accessible

repository supporting business intelligence and data analysis.

"The Microsoft solution seemed easy to use, partly because the interface looked similar to the applications most people already have on their PCs," Crivianu-Gaita said. "It also has a good search function, and it would let the administrators set access privileges for sensitive documents. And because it offered Web-based access, the clinicians in our partner hospitals wouldn't need special software to use the system – they'd only need a Web browser."

The Hospital for Sick Children sought a technology-implementation provider to customize Office SharePoint Server 2007 for further functionality. The institution chose to work with Microsoft Gold Partner Envision IT, which created a self-serve password-retrieval module that would let users manage their authentication credentials without calling on the Hospital's IT staff for help. Envision IT also created a portal-management module that would let the Wait Time Guarantee project administrators add and remove users easily.

"The Hospital needed a system that would be easy to administer," noted Peter Mackenzie, Vice-President of Envision IT. "By developing an extranet solution for Office SharePoint Server 2007, we enhanced ease-of-use and offset the IT maintenance costs that the Hospital would have faced."

After thoroughly researching the Hospital's goals and the project's scope, as well as end-user requirements, hardware requirements and the requisite security architecture to ensure safe data transmission, Envision IT crafted and implemented an Office SharePoint Server 2007-based extranet solution. It took just two Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2005 training sessions to bring the stakeholders up to speed, and within weeks

the Wait Time Guarantee project had addressed this critical technology challenge.

Benefits

Office SharePoint Server 2007 coupled with Envision IT's extranet module has become an important pillar of the Wait Time Guarantee project. The solution not only addresses the project need for strong information privacy protection, but it also affords the project's stakeholders with advanced data-mining capabilities. This has enabled project participants to report critical information back to the project office.

Strong privacy protection
Canada has strong privacy regulations over hospital-patient information, so the Wait Time Guarantee information system needed to ensure that details coming from each institution remained separate and inaccessible to other participating health centres, as well as inaccessible to any outside person. With Office SharePoint Server 2007, project administrators can set information-access privileges to restrict document access down to the individual document level. This translates into peace of mind for the project's administrators and the Hospital's information managers.

Superior data intelligence
The search capabilities in Office SharePoint Server 2007 have turned project stakeholders into data-mining power users. As new information pours in from the participating health centres, the project's stakeholders are able to compare information with earlier information by simply searching the documents for previous details.

Immediate productivity
Since Office SharePoint Server 2007 is accessible through standard Web browsers, the project's system didn't require any software installation on users' computers. As

a result, users gained immediate access to the platform as soon as it was turned on.

The system proved easy to learn, in part because the look and feel of Office SharePoint Server 2007 is similar to those of the other standard Microsoft applications that many people use at home and work. The Wait Time Guarantee project's system is easy for people to navigate and use, and stakeholders were quick to begin uploading and downloading crucial information to and from the platform.

Thanks to the administration features that Envision IT developed, the project's administrators can add and remove users to and from the system easily, and it is simple to set the information-access privileges for strong data protection. This means administrative tasks are dealt with quickly, and there are no management bottlenecks hindering the project.

There are no IT-department hurdles either, because many of the administration tasks were designed for the non-technical administrators to manage.

The same can be said for the participating health care institutions. They don't face the added burden of software installation thanks to the Web-browser accessibility feature in Office SharePoint Server 2007.

The platform has proven so useful for document management, information dissemination, data collection and scrutiny that The Hospital for Sick Children plans an internal Office SharePoint Server 2007 implementation. "A rich document management system would be of value for the doctors and nurses here the same way it has been of value for the clinicians involved in the project," said Crivianu-Gaita. "We've heard nothing but good things from the users of that system. They feel more productive,

and the technology really helps them contribute to solving the wait-time challenge."

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